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Letter dated 25 January 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to address you, in my capacity as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, regarding the briefing on the situation in the Middle East held today, 25 January, by the Security Council.

As you know, the Non-Aligned Movement had made a formal request to participate in the said briefing. Such request was fully justified, considering the importance of the item under discussion for the members of the Movement, which include most of the States of the Middle East region.

The participation of the Movement in the briefing would have allowed the Security Council to have a first-hand account of the opinions and proposals of a high and representative number of Member States of the United Nations on a matter which, owing to its implications, is of interest for all.

The Non-Aligned Movement would highly appreciate it if in the future such meetings were open to the participation of all Member States in a manner that could further enrich the debate on this issue of critical importance not only for the Security Council, but also for the entire membership of the United Nations and the international community at large.

I kindly request that you distribute the present letter and its annex, which contains the Non-Aligned Movement's position on the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Rodrigo **Malmierca Díaz**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement

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Annex to the letter dated 25 January 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Position of the Non-Aligned Movement regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine

The Non-Aligned Movement has reaffirmed its clear position on the situation in the Middle East on several occasions. The Movement is deeply concerned at the increasing deterioration of the situation on the ground and the impasse facing the peace process in the region.

The Non-Aligned Movement has expressed, with especial emphasis, its deep concern at the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the latest period, particularly as a result of the disproportionate, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israel, which has caused a large death toll and injuries to Palestinian civilians, as well as huge material destruction.

Without any doubt, the question of Palestine is the crux of the problem in the Middle East. As long as this situation remains unsolved, the pockets of tension in the region will continue to proliferate.

There will not be a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine if it is not based on the principle of territory for peace, which includes the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

There will not be a solution if the prolonged and illegal Israeli occupation of all the Arab territories occupied ever since 1967 is not brought to a halt. Israel must immediately stop its aggression against the civilian population of Palestine and withdraw its troops straight away from the Gaza Strip to the positions it occupied before June 2006.

Israel must thoroughly take up its obligations and responsibilities in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

Israel must put an end to the occupation and illegitimate and illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the illegal construction of the Separation Wall, which is aimed at seizing and annexing Palestinian land and property and modifying the demographic and geographic character of the Palestinian Territory.

There is no solution to the crisis in the Middle East based on the use of force. The only feasible approach is that of a political and diplomatic solution, which should be resumed immediately.

The Non-Aligned Movement supports the peace process in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and the principle of territory for peace.

The peace process in the Middle East should be revitalized urgently. Every lost minute means more deaths and destruction, as well as an increase in the dangerous

consequences of a crisis that affects us all, even those of us who are not part of the region.

The impasse facing the peace process does not benefit anyone, not even the Israeli people, who also suffer the consequences of their Government's policies.

During the Non-Aligned Movement summit held in September in Havana, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement firmly called upon the United Nations to convene an international conference on the Middle East in order to deliberate on a just and long-lasting general plan for the region, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and other interested parties, including Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement considers it important to begin preparations to convene such an international conference as soon as possible. This would allow relaunching the peace process and addressing the situation in the Middle East with a constructive spirit and a future perspective, through direct negotiations between the parties in conflict, aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just, lasting and peaceful agreement.

The conference should be carefully prepared. It should not become an act of mere formality to seek media impact. It cannot be a one- or two-day meeting to hear speeches without reaching serious commitments. The conference should not be regarded as an end in itself, but as part of the revitalization of the peace process in the Middle East and the quest for negotiated solutions to the different components of the process.

In the context of the grave situation that the Middle East is currently facing, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms the permanent responsibility of the United Nations, including the Security Council, regarding the situation in the region.

It is not a secret that Israel's unpunished acts are to a large extent due to the protection provided to them by the United States Government in the Security Council and in other international forums. The United States has shackled the Security Council with the use of 31 vetoes relative to draft resolutions on the question of Palestine and countless threats to resort to this undemocratic and obsolete privilege.

The deadlock in the Security Council in the current circumstances is unjustifiable. The Council must act without further delay and fulfil its responsibilities in keeping international peace and security. This organ cannot continue to keep silent before these grave developments.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its steadfast commitment to a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, based on the borders prior to 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its support for President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in his rejection of a so-called Palestinian State with provisional borders. This so-called provisional State would only be, in essence, an entity under the domain and control of Israel as the occupying power rather than a sovereign and independent State. The Movement

rejects any attempt to alter the terms of reference of the peace process and further rejects the imposition of unilateral measures and plans aimed at imposing an unlawful unilateral solution by Israel. The Non-Aligned Movement stresses the need for a resumption of direct and substantial negotiations between the parties for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine, based on relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with the rules and principles of international law enshrined therein.

In this regard, the Movement condemns the plans by the Israeli Government to build a new illegal settlement in the Jordan Valley and its expansion of the illegal settlement of "Maale Adumim" in Occupied East Jerusalem in violation of international law, United Nations resolutions and the Road Map.

The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to support and contribute in all possible aspects to the achievement of a just, complete and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, the principle of territory for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the summit meeting of the League of Arab States in March 2002 in Beirut and the Road Map.